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MERCURY.

FROM SIGMOND'S LECTURES ON THE MATERIA MEDICA.

[Continued from page 153.]

THERE is little doubt, that when mercury was introduced into medical practice ointments and plasters were first made use of, and that its internal exhibition was subsequently recommended. To Jacobus Berengarius, commonly called Carpus, has been generally ascribed the first employment of mercurial ointment. Haller, however, says, "*Non quidem inventor unguentorum mercurialium sed laudator.*" An ointment, composed of grease and mercury, was made use of by him very largely at the siege of Naples, which has been considered as the point from which the syphilitic diseases were disseminated over the whole of Europe. It is unnecessary for me to discuss the question as to the manner of the origin of this disease, although it is intimately blended with the history of the introduction of that remedy which was so long considered the only one adapted for its cure, and which has always been written upon by medical men in unison with it. Whether the infection was brought to Naples by the followers of Columbus from the West Indies, or whether it arose in Europe, is a question which still remains *sub judice*. Astruc, who inquired with greater zeal into the subject than any other investigator, has adduced a variety of authorities and arguments to prove that it was an importation from the New World. The rapidity with which the calamity spread over Europe, on the return of the French army from Naples, to which it had marched in a high state of health and of discipline, the concurrent testimony, that previous to that period there had been no such disease so prevalent as to have excited general attention, seem to justify the assertion, "that during the siege, the provisions growing scarce, the ladies of pleasure were turned out of the city, and then had no other resource than their enemies' generosity, who, according to their usual politeness, received them, and all their pestilential favors, with open arms." Amongst the medical officers attached to the army, and one in whom the officers placed the utmost reliance, was Berengarius Carpus, and he obtained the highest reputation for the cures he effected by means of the unguentum Neapolitanum. Dr. Mead, who paid considerable attention to the authors who wrote in his time, and who consulted the medical authorities now very difficult to procure, and was an admirer of the works of Montana, Fallopius, and Nicholaus Massa, tells us, that the prejudices and outcries against mer-

cure arose from its effects as "unguents and emplasters;" and that the Arabians, having recommended mercurial ointments in lepra, "gave a handle to the Italian physicians to try their efficacy in removing the foulness of the skin from a new and terrible contagion; neither were they sparing of their liniments, which they continued to rub in for twelve, fifteen, nay, sometimes for thirty days together." The plan of treatment adopted by Berengarius Carpus, was to obtain, as speedily as possible, the admission of mercury into the system, by friction and by anointing the whole surface of the body. He generally succeeded in overcoming the disease in the strong persons who submitted to his discipline; but the weaker frames could not undergo it, and many were left in a state of great debility, and either fell victims to premature death, or were rendered feeble for the remainder of their existence.

For some time, therefore, mercurial inunction was abandoned, and a mercurial fumigation was substituted. This was effected by placing the patient, naked, near a large fire, into which was thrown a certain quantity of cinnabar, or sulphuret of mercury; the vapor produced its effects upon the skin, but so many inconveniences attended this plan, and in many instances it was found so prejudicial to the lungs, that it likewise fell into disuse; but the mercurial ointment again found favor in the eyes of some of the faculty practising at Montpellier, at that time the fashionable resort of the sick and suffering. Didier and Chycoynau obtained there a very high reputation, by the employment of the mercurial unction, but in a much milder way than had been previously adopted. They placed, too, the patient before the fire, in order to assist absorption, and then directed that a small proportion of the ointment, now called mercurial, or blue ointment, should be diligently rubbed by the individual himself between the thighs; this process was repeated every evening until salivation was produced. Drs. Cantwell and Astruc, who had opportunities of witnessing the cures, thus effected, travelled over various parts of the Continent, recommending what they called the "Montpellier treatment." It was by them introduced into England, and very speedily became the usual mode employed for the cure of the syphilitic diseases. Probably the opinion of John Hunter gave the external treatment a higher degree of character, fifty years ago, than it at present maintains. He says, "When it can be thrown into the constitution with propriety by the external method, it is preferable to the internal, because the skin is not nearly so essential to life as the stomach, and therefore is capable, in itself, of bearing much more than the stomach; it also affects the constitution much less. Many courses of mercury, which are absolutely necessary, would kill the patient if taken by the stomach, proving hurtful both to the stomach and to the intestines, even when given in any form, and joined with the greatest correctors; on the other hand, the way of life will often not allow it to be applied externally."

It has been thought that it is not the crude mercury which is absorbed, but that it is only the oxide formed during the trituration with the fatty matter, that produces any effect; and Mr. Donovan has, in the "*Annals of Philosophy*," expressed his opinion that the oxide is the only active

ingredient. Indeed it has been denied that mercury, in its fluid state, can produce any effect whatever, excepting by its mechanical action. The death of Barton Booth, and of others, has been ascribed to the obstruction produced by quantity, and instances have been adduced where large portions have been swallowed with impunity. The Arabian physicians administered it in *introsusceptio* in very large doses. Fallopius and Brasavolus gave it in worms, and the former author states, that he has known women, anxious for a miscarriage, who swallowed whole pounds of it, without finding any mischievous consequence; and there is a story recorded of one of the Princes of the House of Brandenburg, who, on the first night of marriage, rising from the nuptial-couch to quench the thirst, occasioned by love and wine, drank a large quantity of fluid mercury, but suffered from his draught no harm. The College of Physicians, at Berlin, has given a report upon this subject, which tends to prove that crude quicksilver is not poisonous; but the authority of Dr. Mead must not be passed over. He says, "Experience has convinced us that repeated doses of crude mercury have, in some cases, even a considerable time after they have been taken, exerted their full force, and thrown the body into unexpected disorders. I remember two accidents of this kind, and one of them proved fatal, in which, when a small quantity had been given for many days together, a violent salivation ensued more than two months after the use of it had been left off." He likewise tells us that he saw a young lady who, having swallowed about six drachms every morning, three successive days, was salivated three weeks, "the flux then ceased, but returned after six months, and held a month, and once more came on, in the same manner, two months after; the breath was, at each time, strongly affected, as is usual in mercurial spittings."

There can be no doubt that quicksilver is rapidly absorbed, and that it is to be found in the fluids and in the solids, both during life and after death. I remember, on one occasion, it was stated at the Westminster Medical Society, that a lady who was undergoing a mercurial course by inunction was obliged to have a blister applied to the chest, and on making an aperture for the escape of the usual fluid, a number of globules of quicksilver appeared. In the "*German Ephemerides*" is a staggering assertion, that upon opening the vein of an individual undergoing a mercurial course, some drachms of it flowed out with the blood. Zeller, who wrote a thesis detailing experiments made with mercury upon living animals, has given several instances of its appearance in the secretions; Schenknius met with a case where a spoonful was vomited up; Rhodius remarked an instance of its passing with the urine; and Hochstetter, with the perspiration. In "*Corvisart's Journal*," appears a case related by Dr Jordan, where fluid mercury was passed with the urine; Fourcroy speaks of an instance where a gilder had a number of pustules on the surface of the body, and each of them was found to contain a globule of mercury; after death Mead saw in the perineum of a subject taken from the gallows for dissection, "whose rotten bones discovered what disease had required the use of it, and that I suppose by unction, a quantity of it without any marks of corrosion of the

part where it was collected." It is said that no less than a pound has been found in the brain, and two ounces in the skull-cap of a person who had been salivated. In the Lubben Cabinet of Midwifery there is preserved a pelvis infiltrated with mercury, and taken from a young woman who had died of syphilis. Dr. Christison has collected many instances of this kind; among them is one supplied by Dr. Otto, who, on scraping the bones of a man who had labored under syphilis, remarked minute globules issuing from the osseous substance; in some places globules were deposited between the bone and the periosteum, where the latter had been detached in the progress of putrefaction, and in other places; when the bones were struck a shower of fine globules fell from them. I believe many churchyards of former days will exhibit similar facts. It is not at all uncommon to find the skull-cap more particularly the seat of quicksilver, which insinuates its globules in a most extraordinary way into the texture of the bones. Experiments upon living animals have been tried, which prove the absorption of mercury into the system; those of Dr. Schubarth are the most satisfactory; amongst these a horse was, for twenty-nine days, anointed with mercurial ointment; eighty ounces were rubbed in. After fever, emaciation, diarrhoea, and salivation, he died. A quart of blood was taken from the jugular vein on the sixteenth day, another quart was procured from the great vessels after death; in each quart of blood a liquor was obtained by destructive distillation, in which minute globules were visible; these were so very minute that they account for their having passed unobserved by Klaproth, Bergemann, Rhades, Meissner, and Schweigger, to whose observations I must refer you.

Mercury, improperly administered, is the source of very considerable mischief; at the same time we must weigh well the different statements that have been made by various authors of the effects which it has produced; for, as Dr. Christison has very justly observed, if credit were given to all that has been written, and is still maintained, on this subject, almost every disease in the nosology might be enumerated among its secondary and chronic effects, for there is hardly a disease of common occurrence which has not been imputed, by one author or another, to the direct or indirect operation of mercury. The administration of such doses as do not affect the bowels may be persevered in for some time without affecting the constitution, more particularly when in the form of the blue pill; and although inunction is frequently beneficial, more especially in correcting the biliary secretion, it is very apt to derange the digestive organs if they are at all irritable. It is always of very considerable importance to pay attention to the state of the weather, both as to the prevalence of disease and as to the proper period at which remedies are to be administered. The older physicians laid particular stress upon the influence of the sun and moon upon human bodies; and Dr. Mead has collected some very curious instances to prove the influence of the planets. Modern science and experience have shown that although the paroxysms and periods of disease are guided by regular laws, there is no reason for the belief that the celestial bodies are in any way connected with them, but that they are dependent on atmospheric

changes; we find, under particular aerial states, that epidemics are prevalent, and that their cure must vary according to the changes that produced them, and medicines will, under such circumstances, lose much of their power, and even be productive of evil consequences. During fine, clear weather, the preparations of mercury seldom affect the bowels, nor do they produce that depression of spirits which is so often observed to accompany their use during damp, moist weather. This does not altogether depend upon the state of atmosphere determining from the outward surface and preventing a free action of the skin, because the coldest weather, if it be dry, is well adapted for its administration. It seems, in some measure, to be connected with the electricity of the body. We are well aware, if the weather be damp and foggy, that a listless and languid state is produced, whilst during dry weather, however cold it may be, there is a feeling of light-heartedness and cheerfulness pervading the whole of the system. In the first instance the atmosphere is robbing us of our electricity, which it greedily absorbs; in the latter case the dryness of the air is such that it leaves us in possession of the electricity which seems to belong to us; hence the buoyancy of spirits on the cold, frosty days of December and January, and the suicidal despondency of November; and hence the elasticity, the life, and animation of the Frenchman, the sluggish, heavy movement of the Dutchman, the variable feelings of the Englishman, one day full of hope and cheerfulness, the next day at war with himself and the rest of mankind.

During moist states of the weather mercurial preparations should be sparingly prescribed; and when, from the diseased state of the system, they cannot be dispensed with, very great attention is to be paid to the clothing. To every one in damp, moist conditions of the atmosphere, flannel is a great comfort, but silk is the most useful covering to the body. It is by far the best friend and comforter that can be applied. We know that if a silk handkerchief be perfectly dry, lightning the most accumulated could not pass through it, so decided a non-conductor is it; hence if worn next to the skin, the air cannot absorb the electricity of the human body. Silk waistcoats, drawers, and stockings of the same material, are of the greatest service during the humid state of the winter months of this country. The hypochondriac, the nervous, will derive from them more benefit than from the most active tonic, and they will prove a more invigorating cordial than any spirituous dram; nor are the effects transient, for a buoyancy of spirits, and an agreeable warmth, are thus diffused over the whole frame. Patients, therefore, during mercurial influence are much better wrapped in silk than even when confined to bed; but this latter precaution can more generally be taken, and hence the different preparations are always best administered on the invalid retiring to bed, and he should be kept there until the effects have been produced; this is more especially the case with calomel. As much mischief has arisen from the want of proper precaution, as from large doses, and the habit of the individual is always to be duly weighed and considered. Females of a delicate, nervous, irritable frame, are rendered languid, peevish, incapable of fulfilling their usual duties; they feel chilly, they easily shed tears, are sometimes almost

hysteric ; and though they have no actual suffering to endure, are almost as miserable as if they had it to encounter. On the other hand, the stout, robust, plethoric individual, who probably has to bear very great pain, from the nature of his disease, seems quite insensible to any unwonted effect ; it, however, more generally acts upon such a constitution with a greater energy, and leaves behind it a more decided state of debility, if it be persevered in for any length of time, or if it be often repeated. The inhabitants of this country are very little influenced by it, comparatively speaking, from their high mode of living, and from their being so much habituated to the changes of climate ; but the foreigner is not so fortunate, nor can he bear a dose which, in his native air, he could take with impunity. Indeed, they have a horror of blue pill and of calomel ; and I certainly have witnessed their greater incapability of bearing it here than in their own climate. I have had opportunities of comparing these points—I have seen the practice on the Continent, and I held the station of physician to the King's Theatre, under the administration of Mr. Ebers, for three or four years, and I was uniformly struck with the singular change that climate and habits of life produced upon the effects and operation of medicine. Those who could bear well full doses under ordinary circumstances, could not submit to much smaller ones here, nor could they bear, in any shape or form, the administration of mercury.

The annals of practice in India likewise show that doses of mercurial preparations are very much influenced by a dry climate. Some very highly intelligent men there have prescribed quantities, and their repetitions, which, in our moist and uncertain atmosphere, would very quickly injure the constitution, and leave it in a state to be acted upon by every morbid exciting cause that might present itself. Whether all this is to be attributed to electric states of individuals, or of the atmosphere, remains to be explained. Some of the phenomena which are observed demand further inquiry ; nor do I know that they have undergone much investigation. There seems to be a peculiar state of constitution in which the electric spark is developed, and elicited from an individual, and this when he is in a state of high susceptibility, from the action of any internal or external agent. Nervous individuals exhibit luminous sparks from the hair when it is combed, which are not visible when they are in health, and this is an indication of cerebral excitement. I once witnessed this in company with a physician, in a highly intellectual lady, laboring under great nervousness ; electric sparks, of the most vivid lustre, were elicited by combing, but they disappeared when health was restored.

Dr. Pitcairne's case of the effect of atmosphere is, perhaps, the most remarkable we have on record, both in regard to the disease and its concomitant circumstances. Being at a country seat near Edinburgh, in February, on a fairer day than usual at that season, and the sun looking reddish, he was seized at nine in the morning, the very hour of the new moon, with a sudden bleeding at the nose, after an uncommon faintness ; and the next day, on his return to town, he found that the barometer was lower at that very hour than either he or his friend, Dr. Gregory,



who kept the journal of the weather, had ever observed it, and that another friend of his, Mr. Cockburn, professor of philosophy, had died suddenly at the same hour, by an effusion of blood from the lungs, and also five or six others of his patients were seized with different hemorrhages. Such instances are of importance, and should be inquired into, with a view of throwing some light on subjects which ought not to escape the most anxious investigation.

[To be continued.]

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### INTERESTING AUTOPSY.

BY J. M. BUSH, M.D., LEXINGTON, KY.

In the presence of Dr. Lewis and a number of young gentlemen, students of medicine, I made the autopsic dissection of a negro man between fifty and sixty years of age. I had been acquainted with his history for the last twelve months, in relation to a disease in his chest. I have known him fall suddenly from the seat of his master's carriage while driving along the streets; and, upon other occasions, he has fallen while passing about his business in the yard. Although I never did examine his case with a view of offering medical advice, yet upon two or more occasions, I have seen him suffering with a paroxysm of difficult and apparently suffocating respiration, seeming, indeed, to be enduring distressing pain in the chest, and complaining of a fullness, or a ball, rising quite up into his throat; from which he dreaded immediate choking. His master, upon these occasions, would tell me that he was the subject frequently of hysteric fits. And without suspecting more, I have ordered him a salt and water emetic, which always, for the moment, had a salutary influence in relieving the aggravated manifestations in the breathing organs. As the diagnosis of his physician was that we should find the cause of his death in the cavity of the thorax, and especially in the heart, our attention was first directed to that organ. After elevating the sternum, the pericardium was opened and the heart exposed. The quantity of liquor pericardii was quite limited, perhaps scarcely of the usual amount. I do not think it exceeded the measure of two teaspoonfuls. The large size of the left ventricle was obvious to all present, and after the organ was cut from its attachments and removed from the body, its abnormal condition was more strikingly remarked; without hesitation it was pronounced to be in a diseased state. The right heart with its appendages was removed, and we were so much convinced from the unusual weight and firmness of the ventricle, that we said that upon a section its walls would appear much beyond their usual thickness, which was made plain on cutting into the cavity. The parietes were about twelve lines thick generally, and in some places fifteen. The ventricular cavity was most remarkably contracted. Diminished from its natural capacity at least one half. The coronary arteries were somewhat cartilaginous in their structure. The lungs were healthy, with strong pleuritic adhesions on each side. In the cavity of the abdomen no diseased change was apparent. The stomach presented itself

distended with gas. But a very interesting departure from the usual arrangement of the small and large bowels, was examined with much curiosity. While the jejunum and ileum occupied their usual position, a most beautiful and complete peritoneal sac embraced them, excluding the duodenum and colon. This sac was constructed by reflections on either side and below from the meso-colon, and above it was completed by a prolongation from the upper root of the mesentery. Its thickness was uniform, and its transparency such that the convolutions of the intestines were most distinctly seen within. The omentum was suspended alone from the greater curvature of the stomach, displaying itself extensively, laterally and below. The other singular departure that presented was in the course of the colon. The cæcum was fixed as customary in the right iliac fossa, the colon continued the canal up the right lumbar into the right hypochondriac region; but now, instead of its transverse direction to construct the great arch, just below the stomach, it doubled upon itself to descend, in contact and on the inside of the ascending bowel, to the left iliac region, whence it departed, crossing in front the ileum. As it entered the cæcum it made a beautiful incurvation below the small bowels, across the upper portion of the hypogastrium, its concavity looking upwards; gaining the left iliac region it ascended through the corresponding lumbar to the left hypochondriac, where a process of peritoneum fixed it to the spleen, which was unusually small. As in the right side it formed its duplication, and descended again to constitute the sigmoid flexure and rectum. This strange and extraordinary tract of the colon added to the entire length of the bowel the distance of the ascending and descending portions. The remaining viscera were all normal, in situ and organization.

The patient, when visited by Dr. Lewis, gave such evident symptoms of hydrothorax and hydrops pericardii, as scarcely to admit of a doubt in his mind that we should find fluid both in the pleuritic and pericardiac sacs. Those manifestations, however, inducing the belief that we should see the result of morbid actions, in those serous membranes, in the form of water, had greatly vanished some hours before death. And in the history of the treatment it was said large quantities of water passed away, both from the bowels and kidneys. Could the absorbents have been so inordinately excited as to have thrown off, by those channels, the accumulations that were believed to exist in the chest? There are some singular and striking cases on the records of the profession, not altogether dissimilar to what might be the facts in the present case. In the second volume of the *Transylvania Journal*, Professor Cross details a most remarkable and interesting case of a pulsating tumor in the female abdomen, that appeared to be a sac containing fluid; and by active purging from a dose of senna the entire swelling, with attending inconvenience, all disappeared in a very short time, perhaps in a single night.—*Transylvania Med. Jour.*



## LOSS OF A PORTION OF THE BRAIN—RECOVERY, &amp;c.

*To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.*

SIR,—At the request of Professor Armsby, of Albany, to whom I related the following case, which occurred in my practice, I hereby transmit the same to you for publication. LANGDON I. MARVIN.

*Northville, Montgomery Co., N. Y., April, 1838.*

John Wooster, aged 12 years, had his skull fractured behind the left temple by the kick of a horse, on the evening of the 10th of Sept., 1835. I found him an hour after the accident in a state of insensibility. His pulse were slow and extremely feeble; respiration was stertorous, and with all the symptoms of a severe compression of the brain. On raising the detached portion of integuments, there issued about a teaspoonful of brain from the wound. Perceiving that the dura mater must have been lacerated to some extent, and a portion of the brain broken down, and that other formidable symptoms were present, I was about to consider the case as hopeless.

On visiting him the following morning, I found him still alive, and with much the same symptoms as on the preceding evening; but with no reaction, and without the power of deglutition. I now proposed an operation as the only hope in his case—and this not a very flattering one—which was consented to by his friends.

Dr. Maxwell, of Johnstown, twenty miles from this place, was called and performed the operation of trephining 36 hours after the injury. Twelve fractured and detached pieces of the skull, of different sizes, were extracted from the wound with the forceps, and a few pieces were elevated, exposing a surface of the dura mater as large as a dollar. On the posterior part of fracture, directly under the superior part of the squamous suture, a splinter of bone, half an inch in width, was extracted, which had pierced the dura mater and penetrated the substance of the brain to the depth of one inch. Half a tablespoonful of brain was removed from the wound during the operation. As soon as the depressed portions were removed or elevated, sensibility began to return. The symptoms of compression gradually disappeared, and before he was removed from the table, he conversed rationally, and expressed much surprise to find himself in such a situation, recollecting nothing since he received the injury. The integuments were drawn over the fissure and retained, and simple dressings applied. A violent reaction set in, to reduce which, required repeated and copious bleedings, together with cathartics and antimonials. The wound healed kindly, and three weeks from the operation he was able to walk about.

It is now two years since the injury, and a distinct pulsation may be felt or seen over the whole surface of the original fracture; yet he enjoys excellent health, and retains all his former mental faculties unimpaired.

## PRICES OF MEDICAL BOOKS, DRUGS, &amp;c.

*To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.*

DEAR SIR,—I take the liberty to say a few words in behalf of myself and (at least) some of my country brethren. You frequently, through

the medium of your useful Journal, call our attention to the discovery of some new and useful invention of instruments, and various apparatus, &c., pertaining to the profession of surgery and medicine, the publication of some new and valuable book or books, or the discovery of some valuable medicine which you may think worthy of a trial.

All these things we are glad to hear of; but, give me leave to say, we want some further information—we want the price of your instruments, your apparatus, your books, and your medicines, likewise the place where obtained. This would be of great convenience to those of us who visit your city but seldom, and who have not frequent opportunities to send by a professional man. I sent, some time since, for Coxe's apparatus for removing enlarged tonsils, which I had seen favorably noticed in your Journal, and though I sent by a gentleman well acquainted in your city, still he was unable to find any such instruments. Hull's Utero-abdominal Supporter is offered for sale, and we know where; yet when our female friends wish to know the price, we are wholly unable to tell.

I would respectfully inquire if it would not be fully consistent with the object of your Journal, and tend to increase its usefulness, to give, monthly or quarterly, the prices at which some of the articles of medicine are sold—not embracing many, nor such as we usually obtain in the city papers—especially the newly-mentioned medicines and others, such as creosote, iodine, hydriodate potass, morphine, narcotine, &c. &c. So, also, of various instruments, &c., may we not occasionally know the price? and of medical books likewise? The price desirable for us to know, is not the wholesale price, but for what sum we can purchase a single work, or instrument, or bottle, package, or box of medicine.

Most respectfully yours,

St. Johnsbury, Vt., March 30, 1838.

CALVIN JEWETT.

#### RETENTION OF HERNIA BY TRUSSES—RADICAL CURE.

EXTRACT FROM DR. R. COATES'S LATE WORK ON MEDICINE.

THE truss and its use in retaining the bowel in hernia, are too well known to require particular description. But the proper construction of trusses has been shamefully neglected, until recently, by the profession—being thrown entirely into the hands of instrument-makers and pretenders, whose continual changes and improvements, so called, have rendered it difficult to number the modifications. None of the trusses invented before 1834, could be depended upon for retaining the common inguinal hernia completely and permanently. The bowel would occasionally descend, in defiance of the care of the patient, and the truss itself become a source of danger by its action on the bowel. Humanity is indebted to Dr. Heber Chase, of Philadelphia, for the invention of a complete series of instruments adapted to each variety of hernia, and all the complications of several varieties occurring in the same individual; which instruments, after they are properly adjusted,

are capable of retaining the bowel with absolute certainty under all the exertions required even by laborious professions.

But this is not all—it is found that this certainty and perfection of retention enables the powers of nature to contract the passage, so that after the truss has been worn from nine to eighteen months, the patient generally finds himself *radically cured*. We believe this result will take place in not less than nine-tenths of the cases occurring in persons under fifty years of age, and in a fair proportion of cases in later life.

One of the principal operative surgeons of Philadelphia remarks, that the number of cases of strangulated hernia has diminished astonishingly since the introduction of these instruments.

Empirics and ignorant inventors of trusses have the folly publicly to advertise their instruments for the cure of hernia and varicocele; and we have seen advertisements of this character seemingly backed by the favorable opinions of men high in the profession. We can scarcely believe these signatures to be genuine; but, be this as it may, it is our duty to caution those who suffer under the disease, against the cupidity of any one who would sell such an instrument for such a purpose. A truss may, and often does, give rise to varicocele. We have no patience with the grossness of such deceptions, having witnessed so much and such frequent suffering consequent upon them. Instruments for the treatment of hernia positively require to be adjusted and applied by a surgeon acquainted with the anatomy of the parts, and who has taken pains to study the use and construction of trusses.

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## BOSTON MEDICAL AND SURGICAL JOURNAL.

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BOSTON, APRIL 25, 1838.

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### COATES'S POPULAR MEDICINE.\*

THIS is a very neatly executed work, from the prolific press of Cary, Lea & Blanchard. The title of the volume, perhaps, would not recommend it to the profession, who have had just occasion to be disgusted with treatises on domestic medicine, medical advisers, &c.; but emanating from so high a source, we shall be much disappointed if this volume does not ensure for itself a careful perusal from the scientific practitioner, for which, we will predict, he will be amply repaid. So far as we can allow ourselves to approve of epitomes on medical subjects, we must distinguish this volume as the depository of a large fund of anatomical, physiological and practical truth. But to families, travellers, members of missionary stations, and all who may be unable to procure the services of a regular practitioner, it is a valuable compendium, and for such the work was expressly designed.

But the author, apart from this, had another object to accomplish,

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\* Popular Medicine, or Family Adviser; consisting of outlines of Anatomy, Physiology, and Hygiene, with such other hints on the Practice of Physic, Surgery, and the Diseases of Women and Children, as may prove useful in families when regular physicians cannot be procured, &c. &c. By Raynold Coates, M.D., &c. Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard. 8vo. pp. 614.

which the enlightened practitioner will deem desirable, viz., the extension of correct medical knowledge beyond the limits of the medical profession. We have long considered this a desideratum. Such a purpose gained, will do more towards pulling down the strong holds of quackery and empiricism, in their thousand Protean forms, than the fast-multiplying prosecutions and accumulated verdicts of homicide can ever accomplish. A volume like this, carefully read, will enable the public to distinguish easily between the pretender and the man who has faithfully studied his art. When public opinion is enlightened, we may invoke its resistless arm to our aid in the cause of science and humanity. Give to any patient the slightest knowledge of the structure of his system, or the faintest idea of the principles of the medical art, and he will hesitate before he entrusts the repairing of such delicate machinery to the hands of the marvellous-loving and wonder-working quack.

We have time only for a cursory notice of the plan of the work. It is divided into two general parts, descriptive or theoretical, and practical. The first embraces a particular notice of human general anatomy, enlivened with many physiological observations—a view of the principal animal functions, and their aberration from healthy action—and a very valuable chapter on hygiene. Part second treats of the symptoms of diseases and the most approved methods of treatment.

We cannot close this notice, without special commendation of many portions from which we shall be glad to make extracts. That portion of the chapter on hygiene, treating of clothing, exercise, and errors in female education, should be faithfully studied by every conductor of seminaries for the education of females throughout the Commonwealth. The article on spinal curvatures we commend to them as replete with valuable hints on physical education. The clearness and simplicity of the style of the work will be admired by the profession, as well as the general reader for whom it is adapted. For sale by Little & Brown, Boston.

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#### SCROTAL ELEPHANTIASIS.

REFERENCE has been several times made to the great operation performed on the 3d of October, 1837, at New Orleans, by Dr. Picton, a fearless and successful surgeon of that city, on a negro by the name of Nelson, for scrotal elephantiasis. The tumor was of enormous dimensions, weighing, when dissected from the unfortunate subject of the disease, fifty-three pounds. Nelson remains perfectly well and in good health. Mr. J. Lion, a native artist, has executed two remarkably accurate lithographic drawings, illustrative of the appearance of Nelson before and after the tumor was taken away, which represent the patient on his feet, and both are as true to nature as it is possible to execute such productions. Copies are on sale at Ticknor's bookstore, Washington street, and at Cottons & Barnard's, corner of Washington and Franklin streets, which are so cheap that it is an inducement for any one at all interested in the progress of American surgery to procure them. The price of the two, is \$1.50. They are actually important references, and therefore deserve a place in the library.

We believe this is the first operation of the kind ever performed in the United States. In India, these terrible enlargements are more common than in any other country, and yet they are always viewed with surprise even there. In the August number of the *India Journal of Medical and*

Physical Science, by Dr. Corbyn, just received, two cases are detailed, analogous in character, but not quite so terrible in size and aspect, as Dr. Picton's.

Phulad hur Chapprassee, of the Hindoo caste, aged 34, of a corpulent habit, had labored under the disease for twelve years, and, therefore, was an unpromising subject. The other, Uttram, a Hindoo, aged 36, muscular and healthy otherwise, recovered. The tumor, in each, weighed only about twenty pounds. Each operation lasted eleven minutes: the tunica vaginalis, in both patients, contained hydrocele and hydatids. The spermatic cords, and procreative apparatus, were preserved in both, being in good condition.

Mr. Egerton says that the "cause of this unsightly and truly formidable disease is peculiar," and not understood. The most common commencement, though not the invariable one, is as follows. The individual is attacked for some days with fever, either of the continued or remittent form. Considerable effusion at length takes place into the tissue of the cellular scrotum, nature apparently selecting these parts instead of producing that congestion of the spleen or liver which is so often witnessed as the issue of fevers in some countries.

But it is impossible to comprehend the awfulness and loathsomeness of this malady without inspecting an accurate drawing like those to which our surgical readers are directed.

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*Advertisements of Druggists and Booksellers.*—A gentleman (a subscriber to the Journal), residing in Vermont, has written us a very sensible letter on the subject of the *cost of things necessary in the practice of medicine and surgery*. He inclines to the opinion that a sort of price current, or a specification of the cost of different articles not already well known to the profession, would be extremely useful and important to country practitioners. We agree with him most fully, that it would be an excellent scheme for benefiting the apothecaries, who would be delighted, beyond all manner of doubt, to have the exact No. of their shops pointed out periodically, and a formidable catalogue of their wares and merchandize advertised gratuitously. Much as we wish to oblige the profession, there are bounds beyond which we cannot pass—we cannot advertise for nothing. An advertising page is appropriated to booksellers and druggists; if they care not to avail themselves of its advantages, it is no concern of ours. It is a matter of wonder that an individual, anxious to dispose of an article, the sale of which exclusively depends on the patronage of physicians, will prefer advertising in a common newspaper, which, in a majority of cases, perhaps, does not number more than one medical man in three hundred of its subscribers; when by advertising in a medical journal, almost every physician within three hundred miles of him is made acquainted with all the facts, and becomes even familiar with the locality of the very store in which success or ill success in a great measure depends on the influence of medical practitioners.

Notwithstanding these explanations, and the frequent care we have taken to urge upon the class of persons concerned, the immense advantages accruing to them from the simple plan of advertising in those publications which are sought for by men on whom they must rely for thrift in trade, we feel under obligation to notice all improvements and inventions, and the medical works that may be forwarded for that pur-

pose. The letter is in this day's Journal, and is respectfully recommended to the perusal of those who deal in drugs, medicine, instruments, and medical books.

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*College Course of Anatomical Lectures.*—In consequence of the absence of the professor, the lectures at Cambridge will be given the ensuing term, it is understood, before the college classes, by Dr. Reynolds, who delivered the course at the medical institution the past winter.

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*Medical Festival.*—Faneuil Hall has been granted, by the City Authorities, to the Massachusetts Medical Society for its anniversary dinner, to be given on the ensuing last Monday in May.

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*Transactions of the Medical Society of New York.*—Part I. of Vol. IV. has been published at Albany, and contains a vast amount of local information relative to the Medical Society, besides a variety of useful matter, interesting to the profession. The annual address, by the president, filling thirty pages, together with Dr. Gray's observations on *Prolapsus Uteri*, with reference to the *modus operandi* of Hull's Utero-abdominal Supporter, deserve a careful perusal.

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*Medical Meeting.*—At the annual meeting of the physicians of the County of Middlesex, Ct. held at Haddam, April 12th, 1838, the following officers were elected for the present year. Thomas Miner, *Chairman*; Ira Hutchinson, *Clerk*.

Thomas Miner, Asa L. Spaulding, and Frederick W. Shepherd, were appointed Fellows of the Medical Convention at New Haven, in May next.

Dr. Catlin made a report of an epidemic smallpox, about 80 cases of which disease appeared a year or two since in this county, in the town of Chester and its vicinity. This epidemic was generally in its mildest form, and but two deaths, from it, were known to have occurred. The general preventive, and otherwise modifying powers of vaccination, were strongly confirmed.

Agreeably to appointment, at the meeting previous, Dr. Miner, 2d, read a dissertation upon the structure and functions of the brain and nerves.

Dr. Warner stated a number of cases of pneumonia typhodes, successfully treated at Upper Middletown; and Dr. Shepherd related the history of a singular case of nervous affection.

The meeting was very pleasant and interesting, and it is presumed instructive to all the members present, indicating an improved and elevated state of the profession in the county.

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*Nervous System.*—Rhomborg considers that the elementary fibres of the hypoglossal nerve are the masticatory nerves of the tongue; that the glosso-pharyngeal serves to associate the muscular actions of the larynx, pharynx, velum palati, and tongue; and, finally, that on the chorda tympani depend the articulatory motions of the tongue, and their association with the imitative movements of the face.



**Salivation.**—M. Brachet, of the Hotel Dieu, at Lyons, strongly recommends the acetate of lead as a remedy in cases of violent salivation. He administers from two to three grains twice a day, in conjunction with small doses of opium, and says that he has employed this remedy with success in more than fifty cases.

**Fractures.**—M. Thierry lately submitted to the Royal Academy the history of a case of fracture of the left arm, which had remained unreduced, and without union, from the 26th of June, 1836, to the 13th of January, 1837. A complete cure was obtained by the method of Celsus (rubbing together the ends of the bones) and the permanent starch bandage; the latter was allowed to remain on for seventy days.—*Lancet*.

**Creosote in Cancer.**—Dr. Friese, of Goldapp, assures us that he employed every kind of treatment in vain, until he thought of applying creosote, in the case of a lady who was affected with cancerous ulceration of the skin covering the calf of the leg. One part of creosote in three of distilled water was applied over the surface of the leg, which quickly became white, and was soon afterwards covered with a thin eschar. The latter was detached on the fourth day, and the sore was covered with healthy granulations. The central part healed up after the third application; the edges, however, did not cicatrize before the lotion had been applied seven times; on the last occasion equal parts of creosote and water were used; the lady was thus perfectly cured.—*Berlin Med. Zeit.*, No. 13, 1837.

**Medical Miscellany.**—An essay on the antiquity of Hindu medicine, by J. F. Royle, M.D., has been published in England.—A curious work, entitled the "Age of the Earth, Geologically and Historically considered," has also been published.—The mortality of Charleston, S. C., in 1837, was 630. The population is 30,289—giving one in 48 as the proportion of deaths.—A fatal case of hydrophobia has occurred in Philadelphia in the person of a little girl, who died in about a fortnight after being bitten by a rabid dog.—A *Graham* boarding school, for young ladies, has been opened at Lynn, Mass.—The barque *Sackville*, an English vessel, lying at Sierra Leone, in the month of February, lost her entire crew, from the captain to the cabin boy. Out of an entire new crew, seven died before the barque left port.—A famine had become very distressing in Egypt at the last date, December 11th.—A social meeting of the Boston Medical Association met at Dr. Z. B. Adams's, Pearl street, on Thursday evening last.—Dr. George W. Otis, Jr. has been appointed physician of the Boston Jail.—A child is reported to have died at Leicester, Pa., in consequence of taking less than a teaspoonful of Godfrey's Cordial—a preparation of opium.—An Irishman has just arrived at New York, for the purpose of exhibition, who is seven feet six inches tall.—A negro was accidentally drowned, in Washington city, who had reached the great age of one hundred and fifteen years.—Dr. M'Naughton, of Albany, is president of the Medical Society of the State of New York.—A description of the *acarus scabiei*, represented by three drawings, has been published in one of the London medical periodicals. It agrees, in the main, with that by Dr. Gordon, in one of the numbers of this Journal.—The bill in favor of the Thomsonian system of medicine has been again defeated in the Maryland Legislature.—

Dr. Hunter, recently tried for high treason at Toronto, has been acquitted.—The smallpox now exists at West Cambridge, near Boston.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.—An interesting communication from Bangor, on Nervous Diseases, and also Dr. F.'s valuable reports of anomalous cases, from Virginia, are reserved for next week.

Whole number of deaths in Boston, for the week ending April 21, 35. Males, 14—Females, 21. Consumption, 7—tumor, 1—dropsy in the head, 2—teething, 1—fits, 2—Inflammation of the lungs, 1—lung fever, 2—pleurisy fever, 1—burn, 1—delirium tremens, 1—drowned, 2—marasmus, 2—disease of the brain, 1—measles, 1—croup, 1—paralytic, 1—asthma, 1—sudden, 1—rash, 1—stillborn, 5.

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Boston, August 9, 1837.

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Oct. 18—tf

DR. LEWIS requests those who have books belonging to him, to return them immediately at his residence, No. 80 Boylston Street. 4t—A4

#### RETREAT FOR INVALIDS.

THE profession is respectfully informed that Dr. A. H. WILDER has purchased a large and convenient house in the pleasant town of Groton, Mass., likewise suitable carriages, horses, saddles, &c., fit for the accommodation of nervous invalids. A18—m30

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